

Route 125 - Kings Highway Bridge

Bridge Details:

This 2,540 foot double swing span drawbridge stretches across the Nansemond River on Route 125 in Suffolk. The bridge is 77 years old. It was built by private citizens in 1928 and operated as a toll bridge until September 1963, when VDOT purchased it for \$1 million.

Closure Details:

The Kings Highway bridge was closed March 19. After a recent safety inspection in March 2005, VDOT bridge engineers determined that the bridge has deteriorated beyond the point where it can continue to safely support current traffic volumes. During the inspection, crews identified a fractured critical member on the lower chord of the truss swing span. A critical fracture member is a part of the bridge that is in tension. The failure of this part may cause a portion of, or the entire bridge to collapse.

While VDOT understands that the detour for the hundreds of motorists who use this bridge each day is lengthy, our first priority is always motorist safety. The intent is to close the bridge before it becomes so unsafe that someone is injured.

Detour: Approximately 19 miles: The signed detour route goes from Kings Highway onto Route 10 North, right on Route 258/ Route 32, to Route 17 South, back to Kings Highway.

Bridge Replacement Status:

At a 2001 Location & Design Public Hearing, VDOT presented plans to replace the Kings Highway Bridge with a new bridge parallel to the existing structure. At the hearing, the City of Suffolk and numerous citizens requested that VDOT also study realigning the bridge and roadway upstream to connect to Godwin Boulevard.

VDOT worked with Suffolk residents and local government agencies to select a realignment alternative for the location of the new bridge. This alternative involves constructing a new bridge approximately one mile upstream of the existing bridge, to connect with Five Mile Road and Godwin Boulevard, rather than Kings Highway.

VDOT is currently in the process of designing the new bridge. The next step is to finalize those designs, acquire right of way, work through the environmental process, and identify funding for construction. Funding has not been identified at this time.

Replacement Bridge Specifications

The total length of the new bridge and connecting roads will be approximately 2.2 miles, with the bridge spanning about 0.7 miles over the Nansemond River and nearby wetlands. Approaching roadways will be realigned to connect with the new location. The new bridge will be high enough to allow for the safe passage of both vehicular and boat traffic without delays in travel time.

FAQ's

Why are bridges inspected and what is done with the data?

Following the collapse of the Silver Bridge in West Virginia in 1967, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) developed the National Bridge Inspection Standards. These standards provide guidance on conducting bridge safety inspections. The standards require periodic inspection of all bridges on public roadways, normally at least once every two years. All data from these inspections is submitted to the National Bridge Inventory, which is maintained by the FHWA. Due to its current condition, the Kings Highway Bridge is inspected every six months.

What parts of the bridge are inspected?

To ensure that the information in the National Bridge Inventory is consistent, bridge conditions are reported in a standardized format. This format includes ratings that range from zero to nine and apply to each of three bridge components: superstructure (the superstructure of the bridge includes the framework that supports the deck: the girders, beams and slab), substructure (the substructure refers to the structure(s) that holds the bridge up out of the water: the bents, piers and abutments) and deck (refers to the area of a bridge or suspended structure that vehicles ride on. The deck is most commonly made of steel, concrete or asphalt.)

When and how does VDOT inspect the Kings Highway Bridge?

Normally bridges are scheduled for inspection every two years. Because of the low rating on this bridge, VDOT conducts a thorough inspection of the Kings Highway Bridge every 6 months and a visual inspection quarterly.

How old is the Kings Highway Bridge?

The bridge was designed and constructed by private individuals in 1928. The average life of a bridge in the U.S. is 75 years. The Kings Highway Bridge is located in a harsh environment where it is consistently exposed to saltwater and harsh elements. The bridge is now 77 years old.

Who decides if the bridge is replaced in the existing location or a new location?

The Commonwealth Transportation Board made the final decision in March 2004. The 17-member CTB appointed by the Governor is primarily responsible for locating routes, approving construction contracts, creating traffic regulations, naming highways and administering and allocating for the Transportation Trust Fund. The CTB carefully considered public input regarding the location and chose to build the new bridge in an alternate location.

When will construction start on a new bridge?

Funding has not yet been identified for construction of a new bridge. At this time, VDOT is moving forward with design plans for the new bridge. The next step is to finish those designs, acquire right of way, work through the environmental process, and identify funding for construction.